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## LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY AMONG MEXICANS IN THE UNITED STATES: THE SECRET OF RESILIENCY AND SUCCESSFUL ADAPTATION<sup>1</sup>

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This chapter discusses the issues related to language and identity for Latinos in the complex political, economic, and social contexts of the United States. The situation becomes more complex given frequent fragmented bicultural family experiences. In the study these issues are discussed specifically with reference to language and immigrants, race and ethnicity, within the historical and social-economic contexts of Mexican immigration. The central concern of this chapter is the concept of *terquedad* ('resiliency') of Mexican families and communities: its intimate involvement in the collective to maintain language and serve the community.

### Introduction

The expression 'diaspora,' in Latino terms, means a bicultural and binational existence with a complex, fragmented home economy, which is the result of unpredictable employment. It often implies the capacity of Latinos to adopt new identities on the two sides of the Mexico-U.S. border, and to develop new conceptions of ethnic loyalty, patriotism, and family networks. The significance of the new immigration patterns in the U.S., in particular the predominance of young Latino, especially Mexican, immigrants, has had enormous demographic, social, and cultural consequences for this country. This chapter explores the role of language in the survival of Mexican immigrants and in the formation of their new identities.

The relationship between language and identity for Latinos in the U.S. is complex and is situated within a politically and economically unstable binational existence whose complexities are further compounded by a fragmented bicultural family experience under conditions dictated by poverty. The internalization of the 'American dream' is not a fantasy created thousands of miles away (as it is in the case, say, of Chinese immigrants), but one that is configured from day-to-day encounters of Mexicans with migrant workers returning to their Mexican home

villages. There is romanticization of possible success, fictions of the imagination in the form of mountains of gold in the streets of America (Trueba & Zou 1994; Trueba 1999). There is the palpable reality of Uncle José visiting Tangancícuaro, Michoacan (central Mexico) with his brand-new Ford truck, his expensive boots and hat, and a wallet full of dollars. Yet this attractive image is often tempered by Uncle José's narrative of degrading incidents while crossing the border, and of working in the fields of Modesto, Santa Maria, or Texas. Uncle José is also less anxious to share his tales of the abuses by the *patrón* who would pay him less than the minimum wage, the exposure to pesticides, the subhuman living conditions in the shantytown, the long nights of homesick nostalgia, and the anxiety associated with not being able to communicate in English. But Latinos are extremely resilient and tough, even in the most desperate situations. They understand that building a future for their children goes beyond simply going north looking for work, and that the commitment to their children's future welfare demands profound change and unexpected sacrifice. As Paulo Freire (1993:9) has eloquently stated, 'Não há mudança sem sonho como não há sonho sem esperança [There is no change without a dream, as there is no dream without hope].'

What keeps Latinos hopeful is their daily struggle for equity, a deep understanding of the nature of oppression, and their fight to regain control of their lives. Latino immigrants soon discover their race and their ethnicity and become experts in survival by adapting to new life styles, as in acquiring second and third languages (many Mexican Indians speak as their first language Nahuatl, Otomí, or any of the Mayan languages, and learn Spanish as their second language). America's obsession with race and ethnicity is a function of anxiety about the increasing waves of 'color' immigrants, especially Asians and Latinos. Thus, race and ethnicity continue to be at the center of public discourse and of passionate political debates in the Americas, including Latin America. The more elusive sociocultural definitions of race take on new dimensions in the daily lives of members of pluralistic societies that have become *de jure* integrated, but *de facto* economically and socially segregated and stratified.

McLaren (1995:117) speaks about the American 'predatory culture' that configures modern life on the exploitation of less technologically developed countries and individuals:

In our hyper-fragmented and predatory postmodern culture, democracy is secured through the power to control consciousness and semiotize and discipline bodies by mapping and manipulating sounds, images, and information and forcing identity to take refuge in the forms of subjectivity increasingly experienced as isolated and separate from larger social contexts.

Modern anthropology essentially discards 'race' as an operational concept because there is an infinite number of combinations and permutations of human characteristics beyond eye and skin color, bone structure, weight and stature, dis-

tribution of fat, and overall appearance. Anthropologists today regret the 'crimes of anthropology' and the role of European anthropologists in the Nazi regime, in which they became 'race experts' and decided the lives of thousands of villagers in Poland and in other ways contributed to the crimes of the Third Reich. Files in Berlin, Koblenz, and Krakow show clearly how Nazi anthropologists were instruments of a racist regime (Schafft 1999:56). The miscegenation between Europeans and Meso-American Indians, and between European North Americans and mestizos from Mexico is of such proportions that we all need to consider this issue beyond the chemical and physiological structure of internal organs, blood types, and genes, to understand the non-biological foundations of race. Latinos are products of physical and human environments played out in the binational arenas of the Southwest, in the dynamics of rapidly increasing waves of immigration from Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries. Socially defined concepts of race are vital in human relations because they determine norms of appropriate interaction, judgments about intelligence, and expectations about behavior. The social concept of race remains elusive until it is fleshed out in specific interactional (often conflictive) contexts: black versus white, brown versus white, black versus yellow, and others. This elusiveness is compounded by the fact that we tend to abuse the concept of race by bringing ethnicity into the picture, even to the point of using both terms interchangeably. The word *ethnicity* comes from *ethnos* (Greek 'people'), and it has been the center of anthropological studies for over a century. Ethnographers have dedicated millions of hours collecting descriptions of ethnic groups around the world: their language, culture, environment, occupations, marriage patterns, family life, kinship system, property, law, and so on.

### Language and immigrants

The importance of language facility for immigrants into new ethnic matrices cannot be overemphasized. Their very ability to retain a measure of self-identity and personal integrity, to communicate and pass on to the next generation their values and lifestyle, depends on their ability to retain the home language. Therefore, in the study of Latinos in diaspora, we need to focus on factors that make language maintenance possible at least for the collectivity, the community that is trying to survive in the U.S. Studies of ethnic groups in the U.S. and other Western societies focus on socially and culturally stratified immigrant groups who are recognized as collectively retaining unique characteristics different from those of mainstream people (see Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton 1990; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba 1991; Trueba, Rodríguez, Zou, & Cintrón 1993; Trueba, Cheng, & Ima 1993; Trueba & Zou 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Trueba 1999 and Trueba [Forthcoming]). Their language, culture, religion, art, values, lifestyle, family organization, children's socialization, and world view are seen by the members of the group as uniquely linked to their home country and ancestors. At times, physical appearance separates them from the rest of society and from other subgroups in the larger society. Consequently, ethnicity refers to that complex set of characteristics

of groups who share historical or mythical common ancestors and maintain their own identity in contrast or opposition to mainstream society. An immigrant of color in the United States, i.e., a nonwhite person who might be a second- or third-generation immigrant — even one who has a perfect command of the English language — is often asked, 'Where are you from?'

Race and ethnicity determine a person's relative status and chances for success. Race and ethnicity can predict residential information, and residence can predict educational achievement, income, school-dropout and suspension rate, size of family, mortality trends, likelihood of incarceration, tendencies to violence, use of welfare, and so on and on. As Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995:48-9) have emphasized, social class and gender considerations alone 'are not powerful enough to explain all the differences? (or variance) in school experience and performance'; consequently, we must conclude that 'race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.' The penalties of exclusion and prejudice explain the rapid assimilation of Latinos who can pass for mainstream citizens, the changes in names and dressing patterns, loss of the home language, and overall efforts to hide ethnic and linguistic identities in certain contexts. Ainsle points out the profound mourning that increases in immigrants' hearts the more they try to assimilate, and, using Freud's words, characterizes this acute state of mourning as a way of 'perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish,' knowing that 'we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute' (Ainsle 1998:285).

Schools in the American society of the 20th century are viewed as responsible for assimilating ethnics and making them full Americans. The fear (somewhat latent) is that the new immigration waves of Latinos and Asians are not 'assimilable'. This fear goes in cycles and determines the waves of tolerance and intolerance for ethnic diversity, language diversity, and cultural diversity (especially religious and socio-economic) manifested now in our streets and institutions. The fact that elementary and secondary-school performance is affected by linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity intensifies the xenophobic tendencies in school and society. Additionally, racial and ethnic prejudice is not confined to public schools. It is also present in higher education, and clearly present in hiring, promotion, and retention policies and practices.

### **Race and ethnicity**

The use of the terms 'race' and 'clannish race' is indicative of the historical confusion between race and ethnicity. White European immigrants were not physically different from other Americans. There is also nothing new in the recent efforts to 'close our borders' and do away with illegal immigration. The impact of xenophobia is subtle and does not have the dramatic effect of the high-tech flamboyant cavalry of INS officers riding along the border between Tijuana and San Diego. Latinos continue to face difficult years, as other immigrants suffered from the turn of the century until the mid-1920s, when they were accused of moral

turpitude and were socially ostracized only because they used their home language to communicate with one another and with some students. And the use of the home language continues to make an enormous difference in the adaptation of immigrant populations to the host country. Although immigration trends have changed drastically since the 1920s with the dramatic increase in Hispanic and Asian populations, the working conditions and exploitation of many immigrants remain the same. Many immigrant and migrant workers (for example, farm workers in California) are willing to sacrifice their lives working in the fields at low wages and in unhealthy conditions because they need work and want to open up educational opportunities for their children. Education is the only hope they have of getting their families out of poverty. In this context, racial and ethnic intolerance in higher education profoundly affects the access to and quality of education for racial and ethnic minority students.

Critical theory experts have continued to denounce the ethnocentrism of schools and their reluctance to meet the needs of linguistically different children. Their assumption is that prejudice begins in the school-setting with the way children are socialized into academic achievement (See Freire 1973, 1993, 1995; Freire & Macedo 1987; Apple 1989 & 1993; Aronowitz & Giroux 1991; Gadotti 1996; Giroux & McLaren 1994; McLaren 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995; and Leistyna, Woodrum, & Sherblom 1996).

### **Historical and socio-economic contexts of Mexican immigration**

The struggle of Mexicans, in what is United States territory today, did not stop with the tens of thousands who came to do unskilled labor in the late 1800s. Certainly, some Mexicans were living in the Southwest prior to the annexation of Mexican territory by the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty of 1848, but many more have come since. Mexicans have been coming to find employment in increasing numbers from the beginning of this century. In 1900 the U.S. Census estimated that there were 103,393 Mexican immigrants. By 1910, there were 221,915; by 1920, 486,418; and by December 31, 1926 the official count was of 890,746 (Gamio 1930:2). The exploitation of so-called inferior people and the accepted practice of depriving them of certain rights was common during the last century and the first decades of this one. The residential segregation of Mexicans, firmly established on the West Coast at the turn of the century, became the foundation for the widespread segregation of the 1920s and 30s; Mexicans were not allowed in public facilities such as schools, restaurants, swimming pools, and theaters (Menchaca & Valencia 1990:230).

Recently, scholars have emphasized the significance of Mexican immigration in the overall immigration patterns of modern America. The rising numbers of legal and unauthorized immigrants, refugees, and asylees represent a pattern that is changing the face and texture of American democracy and ethnic/racial composition in the U.S. The Mexican-origin population has grown at a steady and fast pace since 1980. Part of this growth is understandable because of the numbers of



children in Mexican families. Without immigration, however, in 1990 the Mexican-origin population (the total Mexican-origin is the sum of the Mexican-born population and U.S. natives of Mexican parentage) would have been about 14 percent of its current size. Its increase is primarily the result of immigration (González Baker, Bean, Escobar Latapí & Weintraub 1998:81-6).

Primarily for economic reasons, there is a steady stream of immigrants from Mexico that, along with other Latino immigrants, has become the single largest continental proportion (nearly 38 percent) of legal immigrants, and over 80 percent of undocumented immigrants. In addition to the role of Mexico in modern migration movements into the United States, Mexico's economic and political importance was demonstrated by the U.S. government's role in pursuing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the diligent response to Mexico's 1994 economic crisis. This flow of Mexican immigrants will continue at a rapid pace. Foreign-born persons of Mexican origin in 1980 constituted 15 percent of all legal immigrants; in 1990, 20.7 percent; in 1994-1995, 28.4 percent.

Of all Latino immigrants, 78 percent came between 1970 and 1989 (6.5 million or one-third of all immigrants), and 50 percent came in the 1980s; only 27 percent of the Latinos have become citizens of the United States, which is understandable, given their recent arrival, their types of work, their rural backgrounds, and the limited assistance available. Sixty percent of Mexican immigrants live in California. As has been recognized, a person's educational level seems to predict economic level and employment. The highest rates of poverty are found among the populations with the least education — Mexicans, Salvadorians, Guatemalans, and Dominicans. New immigrant children face many difficult problems in their adaptation (Bureau of the Census 1996). In 1990, after 140 years of predominantly white enrollment, 50 percent of the California public school students belonged to ethnic and racial subgroups. There is already no longer a numerical majority of whites. By the year 2030, white students will constitute only about 30 percent of the total enrollment, while Latino students will represent the largest group (44 percent of the total enrollment; Valencia 1991:17). Other demographic projections suggest that the white school-age population will decrease for the country at large, while the Latino school-age population will continue to increase. Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 and 2 in the Appendix summarize data of segregation and enrollment growth.

Latino parents' naïve notions about the politics of employment, organization, and politics in schools, their perception of societal demands for cultural homogenization, and the acceptance of an inferior status are not shared by their children, who feel an ethical responsibility to react and fight back. Much of what happens in gang struggles and street violence is related to marginalization (Vigil 1989, 1997). Many Mexican families reflect in their new lives a change not only from one country to another, but from a rural to an urban setting. Of course, the added dimension in this country is, that in order to acquire the necessary socio-political knowledge of appropriate conduct in urban settings, immigrants must

first acquire the communicative skills to function in a second language. Unfortunately, Mexican immigrants are forced to take jobs that are physically exhausting and leave them little time to acquire communicative skills in English. Consequently, their children (as soon as they learn some English) must play adult roles in making momentous decisions for their parents. Mexican immigrant children are socialized in a new linguistic and cultural environment without help in the development of their second-language skills and cognitive abilities required for high school achievement

**Table 1:** Growth of Latino enrollments 1970-1994

	1970	1994	CHANGE 1970-94	
	ENROLLMENT	ENROLLMENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
CALIFORNIA	706,900	1,953,343	1,246,443	176.3
TEXAS	565,900	1,304,269	738,369	130.5
NEW YORK	316,600	440,043	123,443	39.0
FLORIDA	65,700	301,206	235,506	358.5
ILLINOIS	78,100	218,568	140,468	179.9
ARIZONA	85,500	203,087	117,597	137.5
NEW MEXICO	109,300	148,772	39,472	36.1
NEW JERSEY	59,100	148,345	89,245	151.0

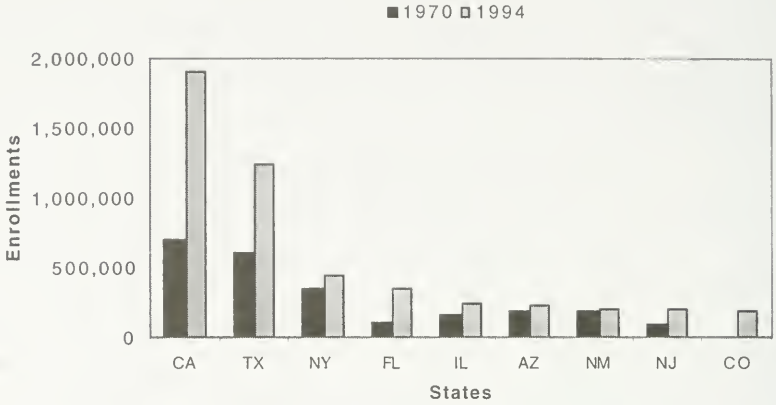
Source: Orfield, Bachmeier, James, & Eitle 1997.

**Table 2:** State rankings in segregation of Latino students by three measures, 1994-95 school years

% IN MAJORITY WHITE SCHOOLS		% IN 90-100% MINORITY SCHOOLS		% WHITES IN SCHOOL OF TYPICAL LATINO	
NEW YORK	13.8	NEW YORK	57.3	NEW YORK	19.2
CALIFORNIA	17.3	NEW JERSEY	43.4	CALIFORNIA	24.8
TEXAS	19.6	TEXAS	43.0	TEXAS	25.0
NEW MEXICO	21.6	CALIFORNIA	38.7	NEW JERSEY	29.3
RHODE ISLAND	24.8	ILLINOIS	34.9	ILLINOIS	30.9
ILLINOIS	26.5	CONNECTICUT	32.4	NEW MEXICO	31.0
NEW JERSEY	27.3	FLORIDA	27.6	FLORIDA	34.5
CONNECTICUT	31.9	PENNSYLVANIA	25.8	CONNECTICUT	35.0
FLORIDA	33.2	NEW MEXICO	20.0	RHODE ISLAND	38.0
ARIZONA	34.0	ARIZONA	18.9	ARIZONA	38.2

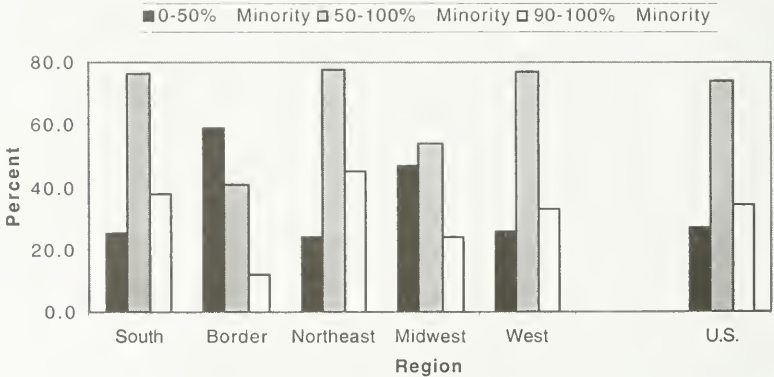
Source: Orfield, Bachmeier, James, & Eitle 1997.

**Figure 1:** Growth of Latino enrollments, 1970-94.  
States with more than 100,000 Latino students



Source: Gary Orfield, M. Bachmeier, D. James, & T. Eitle: Deepening segregation in American public schools, *Equity and Excellence in Education* 30:2 (September 1997).

**Figure 2:** Latino segregation by region, 1994-95  
Percent of Latino students in region in schools



Source: Gary Orfield, M. Bachmeier, D. James, & T. Eitle: Deepening segregation in American public schools, *Equity and Excellence in Education* 30:2 (September 1997).

A number of scholars argue that the education of Latinos is worse now than in the previous decade (Portes 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 1995a and 1995b; M. Suárez-Orozco 1998a, 1998b; Valencia 1990, 1997). Recent studies, however, document the academic success of Latino students in high school and



their continued efforts to succeed in their adult lives, and argue that the family and home environment provides them with strong support (Diaz Salcedo 1996). These narratives of academic achievement in the midst of social and economic inequity represent a surprising degree of success where failure was expected. It seems that the retention of the home language and the acquisition of the second language, if accompanied by high literacy levels in both English and Spanish, constitute a powerful factor affecting the successful adaptation of Mexican immigrants and their understanding of the complex U.S. social, economic, and political systems. Their very ability to handle text related to those systems necessary for the well-being of the family (contracts, government documents, bank documents, hospital documents, immigration papers, and so on) is contingent upon their bilingualism and biliteracy. On the other hand, the rapid marginalization of some Mexican families is accelerated by their problems in understanding American institutions (indeed, any complex systems in both countries), accompanied by the lack of literacy and language proficiency in either Spanish or English. This marginalization often starts long before they arrive in this country. Their naïve notions about the politics of employment, the organization of schools, the demands of society, and the U.S. legal and economic system often result in tragic consequences (unwarranted incarceration, loss of income, ignorance of civil rights, and various sorts of abuses). The lack of linguistic and literacy skills may reflect an abrupt transition from rural to urban settings, from simple village life to life in large metropolises. This transition is accompanied by cultural shock and deterioration in mental health. In order for immigrants to acquire the necessary sociopolitical knowledge to exhibit appropriate behavior in urban settings, they must first acquire the communicative skills to do so in a second language.

There is an intimate relationship between the successful adaptation of Mexican immigrant families to U.S. society and the academic success of their children. For example, recent studies in central California (Trueba 1999, and Trueba [Forthcoming]) show that the most serious problem faced by the children of immigrants on the West coast is the alienating experience of schooling, the rapid marginalization of these children, and their confusion regarding personal identity, cultural values, social acceptance, ability to achieve, and self-worth. However, if children manage to retain a strong self-identity and remain part of their sociocultural community, they can perform well in school.

Sometimes a Mexican family takes drastic measures to salvage the moral character and overall well-being of a young family member by taking him or her back to Mexico for a period of time to complete his or her education, to re-acquire Spanish, to work under supervision, and even to marry a 'good' local person. Sometimes the entire family returns to Mexico for as much as two or three years in order to re-educate teenagers in family values. This repatriation is often associated with the dilemma faced in assessing their financial and moral risks if they continue to live and work in the United States. There are numbers of repatriated former U.S. farm workers in central Mexico (in Colima, Michoacán, Jalisco, and other states). In contrast to them, many alienated Mexican immigrant children in major

metropolises (in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Houston, and other U.S. cities), cannot manage to retain their home language and culture, or their familiar cultural institutions and networks. Some seem to survive the trauma of American schooling and to achieve well. This, of course, is the result of a carefully executed plan of education engineered primarily by the mothers, who monitor schooling, and create vast support networks on both sides of the border.

### **The secret of resiliency: Immigrant women in California**

The *terquedad* — resiliency — of Mexican families and communities is a central consideration of this paper. The socio-cultural and psychological basis of *terquedad*, and its intimate involvement in the collective is profoundly linked to its members' commitment to maintaining their language and a sense of 'community'. Without this *terquedad*, their children would never understand the importance of their ethnic identity and their historical relationship with their ancestors. Mexican workers are proud of retaining their language and culture. The women's role in this retention requires endurance and determination, as shown not only in their daily agricultural labor but also in their capacity to organize themselves into a political force in order to negotiate with schools to work for their children's education. They seem to learn quickly how American society functions. They also know how to motivate their children to achieve academically. Their daily oppressive work in the fields and packing houses stands in clear contrast to their own sense of self-worth and their enormous prestige in their home villages in Mexico. While they must work hard under precarious conditions that affect their health significantly (they suffer from arthritis, bronchitis, allergies, malnutrition, and high blood pressure), this oppression does not seem to break their spirits or to jeopardize their determination to succeed. Neither economic problems (often associated with the lack of steady employment) nor the frequent verbal abuse and prejudice of bosses and neighbors deter them. And when their husbands lose hope and start drinking or otherwise misbehaving, the women take over the control of their finances and the entire management of family affairs. Mexican migrant women know they are tough and determined, and they are proud of their survival in the worst of circumstances. These physically and spiritually strong women speak with their own voices and feel important, individually and collectively.

### **Conclusion**

As a dear friend and famous scholar, Dr. Jorge González, from Colima, Mexico, commented once: 'The center of gravity of Comala — a small town in rural Colima — is in Pomona, California.' Why was Professor González able to make this statement? Because all the funds for the village activities, the politics and the economic life of Comala depend on their children in exile who send money home from the U.S. Indeed, the annual amount sent to Mexico from Mexican workers in the U.S. is estimated at over \$5 billion. The mid-nineteenth century reflected in the repugnant statement of T. J. Farhan, a traveler to the west coast in 1855, still hurts us (Cited in Menchaca & Valencia 1990:229):

Californians [i.e., Mexicans] are an imbecile, pusillanimous, race of men, and unfit to control the destinies of that beautiful country ... The Old Saxon blood must stride the continent, must command all its northern shores ... and in their own unaided might, erect the alter of civil and religious freedom on the plains of the Californias..

Crimes against people have multiplied not only abroad but in the U.S. Jasper, Texas, saw a man dragged to death behind a truck, only because he was black. The killers, three white boys, belonged to white supremacist organizations committed to the destruction of people of color. The subtle racism in corporations, businesses, and even in academia keeps up myths about race and ethnicity that are fed by the anxiety of an aging white population concerned with controlling wealth, military power, and technical superiority over the rest of the world.

The role of women and people of color in the military under the leadership of 'liberal' white bosses is changing in front of our eyes. The presence of Blacks and Latinos in academia, in the medical professions, and in businesses is now a reality, but a reality still shocking many mainstream Americans from European ancestry. The reality of a democracy in transition, a somewhat misrepresented model of democracy for the world, will in the next few decades become transformed to accommodate a new social, ethnic, and economic reality in this country. The reality will be of a population that is multi-ethnic, multicultural, and perfectly competent to handle the institutions of this country, and to pursue the goals of technical, economic, and military superiority of the United States, with conditions: respect for people's differences, improving the ability to work across color, linguistic, and cultural lines, and doing away with prejudice of all sorts. Will America be able to succeed? The answer to this difficult question will manifest itself in increasing numbers of interracial and interethnic marriages, in the discovery of comfortable working relationships between mainstream people and 'ethnics', and in the ability of our intellectual leaders (university professors, teacher educators, and school teachers) to prepare our children of tomorrow to live and work in peace with anyone with whom they come in contact.

One of the implied conditions for the success of our democratic experiment in America is the ability of ethnic groups, especially the Latinos, who are growing the fastest and increasing most rapidly, to adapt to American society, to discover new identities which permit them to overcome prejudice and to achieve in school. I contend in a recent book (Trueba 1999) that Mexican immigrants and other Latinos develop new identities (beyond their ethnic identity) to cope with the challenges of living in American society, and that they create these identities as both genuine Latinos (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, etc.) and genuine Americans — i.e., competent participants in American political and economic institutions, precisely because they are resilient and determined, capable of handling rough experiences, hunger, abuse, prejudice, and poverty. They find their strength in the creation of new communities that replicate their original communities in rural vil-

lages, their original kin systems, and the family ties they had in their countries of origin.

Resiliency and multiple identities are parts of a dynamic psychological living environment that demands a very flexible personality, a strong character, and superb physical and psychological well-being. The secret of resiliency is illustrated in the life of an immigrant woman, Lupita, who has recently decided to take American citizenship, knowing that she will be allowed to retain her Mexican rights and Mexican identity. She has also organized her family and friends, who, like her, have worked in this country for many years, to study for the citizenship examination. Why is she engaged in this way? To protect the community's children, the next generation, and to give them a chance to become educated and respected in this country. As Lupita told her children in front of me: 'Me ven así, llena de lodo y cansada? Me ven enferma y fregada? Bueno, pues estudien y estudien duro para que Uds. no sufran como yo; pero no se dejen. Con su aprovechamiento enséñenles a los *Bolillos* que Uds. sí pueden, y sí saben [You see me like this, muddy and tired? You see me sick and messed up? Well, now you study and study hard so you don't suffer as I have; but don't let them (the whites) beat you. With your school achievement, show the *Bolillos* (whites) that you can [learn] and that you know].'

This is the expression of *terquedad* that resounds throughout U.S. Latino communities; it is an expression that we will be hearing more and more in the future.

## NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Portions of this chapter appeared in *Latinos Unidos: From Cultural Diversity to the Politics of Solidarity* by H. T. Trueba (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

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